

## VERIFIED: ALCOHOL INDUSTRY CALLING THE SHOTS ON AUSTRALIAN HEALTH POLICY

**7 August 2019:** New research and analysis, following a ‘bombshell’ media investigation, has raised further serious concerns about alcohol industry interference in the development of health policy.

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) today released the paper [Alcohol industry fingerprints: Analysis of modifications to the National Alcohol Strategy](#) (NAS) which confirms the NAS has been undermined following so-called ‘consultation’ with the alcohol industry.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says a [recent ABC investigation](#) revealed the NAS, which was presented to the States and Territories for approval early this year, includes significant pro-alcohol modifications.

“FARE’s analysis of this ‘revised draft’ against the previous public [‘consultation draft’](#) confirms there have been critical word changes, deletions and insertions,” he said.

Mr Thorn says measures that are proven to reduce alcohol-related harm have been either watered down or erased, substituted with content directly from the alcohol industry playbook that normalises the consumption of alcohol.

“A clear statement around the ‘alcohol industry having no role in developing national alcohol policy’ has been struck out, as have all safeguards to manage conflicts of interest,” Mr Thorn said.

The Background Briefing investigation found the late-stage involvement of the alcohol industry was also against the specific recommendations of the Health Minister’s [senior departmental advisors](#).

“With all public interest safeguards removed, the last line of protection is the State and Territory Ministers, some of who revealed to the ABC they won’t approve the NAS, despite Australia being without a strategy since 2011,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn has likened the NAS development process to an exercise in regulatory capture by the alcohol industry to maximise profit and shareholder value over the public interest.

“This contradicts the most basic integrity requirements of good government,” Mr Thorn said.

FARE’s analysis of the NAS coincides with [new research showing](#) the alcohol industry is successfully impeding the prevention of death and disease from alcohol use in Australia.

Research author Tony Brown from the University of Newcastle says his paper [Legislative Capture: A Critical Consideration in the Commercial Determinants of Public Health](#), published in the Journal of Law and Medicine, offers a new model for detecting regulatory capture and applies the test in a case study on reform of NSW alcohol supply laws.



“The research found significant encroachment of the public interest and alcohol industry capture of the legislative process,” Mr Brown said.

“Through this research I have developed a prototype legislative capture test, which identifies that the alcohol industry’s practise of making large political donations to buy influence fits the elements of regulatory capture, and may extend into the realm of ‘clientele corruption’ recognised by the High Court of Australia,” he said.

Mr Thorn says these examples of undue industry influence are the type of scenarios the World Health Organization and the United Nations have specifically warned of the need to protect against.

“This type of political interference by vested commercial interests is unacceptable to the Australian community and highlights the need for greater safeguards and accountability in policymaking,” Mr Thorn said.

“We know that the majority of Australians are highly sceptical of alcohol companies, with 70 per cent saying the industry has a conflict of interest being involved in developing alcohol policy to reduce alcohol harm while making profits from selling alcohol products,” he said.

**Michael Thorn and Tony Brown are available for interview.**

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol. Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. Nearly 6,000 lives are lost every year and more than 144,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation’s greatest preventive health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harm by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.